LAUGHING ANNE & ONE DAY MORE

Two Plays by

JOSEPH CONRAD

With an Introduction by

JOHN GALSWORTHY

THE publication of these two plays was one of the last matters dealt with by the Author, who was to have written a Preface to this volume. His death occurred before this could be done. An Introduction has now been specially written by Mr. John Galsworthy, who treats of all the dramatic works by the great novelist, Joseph Conrad. *The Secret Agent*, *Laughing Anne* ("a pleasure to read"), and *One Day More* ("nearly a little masterpiece"), are all critically dealt with by Mr. Galsworthy, who quotes at length from letters by Conrad on his plays and gives other personal sidelights.

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To the Reader

Your attention is drawn to the List at the end of this volume

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ONE DAY MORE

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INTRODUCTION

CONRAD'S three plays, *One Day More*, *Laughing Anne*, and *The Secret Agent*, are all adaptations from stories, and the two in this volume have, curiously enough, the same main theme—the suffering of a woman capable of self-sacrifice. The fact that they are adaptations makes it the more difficult to answer the usual speculation whether this great novelist could, if he had given his time to the task, have become a great dramatist—a speculation, indeed, somewhat idle. In a writing life of thirty years a man has time for much variety. We know that Conrad had a keen dramatic sense; we know—at least I know—that he had fitful longings to write for the stage. And the fact that he never, in all those years, wrote directly for it is, to me, proof that his nature recoiled too definitely from the limitations which the stage imposes on word painting and the subtler efforts of a psychologist. The novel suited his nature better than the play, and he instinctively kept to it. If, through unhappy accident, he had begun by writing for the stage, without having first experienced the wider freedom and tasted the more exquisite savour of the novel, he would

no doubt have become one of the greatest dramatists of our time. But we should have lost by it, for, as a novelist, he was in many respects unique.

The process of adaptation is, generally, fatal to the achievement of a stage masterpiece; yet in *One Day More* Conrad so nearly achieved a little masterpiece as to show natural aptitude of the highest order.

It is, in some sort, fitting that I should write this introduction, since that first of his adaptations for the stage was made in my studio workroom on Campden Hill. Conrad worked at one end of it, on *One Day More*, while, at the other end, I was labouring at *The Man of Property*. He sat at a table close to the big window, I stood at a desk, with my back to him, and now and then we would stop and exchange lamentations on the miseries of our respective lots.

"My dear fellow," he would say, "this is too horrible for words." Conrad did not suffer from satisfaction with his own work; yet *One Day More* gave him a certain pleasure when he had finished it, and he was eager to see it performed.

He wrote from Capri in May, 1905: "Another piece of news is that (would you believe

it ?) the Stage Society wishes to perform *To-morrow* " (as it was then called) " next June. Colvin wrote me. Several men, and amongst them G. B. Shaw, profess themselves very much struck." They were right to be struck—the little play has a strange and haunting quality. Old Hagberd, Harry, and Bessie, are very remarkable creations.

Not being in England when it was performed, I cannot recall what sort of reception it had from the *cognoscenti* of the Stage Society ; but it has evidently been too weird and uncompromising a little piece of tragedy for London Town at large.

I do not know when Conrad adapted *Laughing Anne* from the story *Because of the Dollars*, and indeed never read it till I came to write this preface. Demanding in its short life three scene-sets, none of them easy, and the last exceptionally difficult in stage conditions, it has, as yet, I believe, never been performed. It exemplifies that kind of innocence which novelists commonly have as to what will " go down " on the stage. Conrad probably never realized that a " man without hands " would be an almost unbearable spectacle ; that what you can write about freely cannot always be endured by the living eye. Anyone who has

passed over the Bridge of Galata in the old days—which, very likely, are the new days too —and seen what the beggars there offered to one's sense of pity, will appreciate the physical shuddering inspired by that particular deformity. The lighting, too, of the last scene would be most difficult—effects which depend on shudderings grounded in dim light are to be avoided. A moment or two—yes ; but a whole scene—no ! To read this play, however, is a pleasure. The figures of Davidson, of poor Laughing Anne, of Fector, Bamtz, and the monster without hands, are thoroughly effective ; and, except for those physical drawbacks, the play is admirably contrived.

It is exceedingly fortunate that we have in this volume examples of Conrad's dramatic art, which disclose at once what he did, and what he could have done ; yet convince us, perhaps, that he was right in not further sacrificing the novel to the drama. In this connection I am tempted to refer here to the longer adaptation of that most impressive novel *The Secret Agent* ; for we have therein a salient illustration, not only of the difficulty of adaptation, but of the fundamental difference between novel and drama as a medium for presenting life. *The Secret Agent* was a novel

of atmosphere, a revelation of hidden depths in human nature, and a sort of creation of an underworld. It depended for its triumph on innumerable subtleties, and the fidelity of a sustained mood. Those of us, not many, who work in both forms, know, to a degree not possible, perhaps, to those who work in one, or work in neither, the cruel obstacles which the physical conditions of the stage put in the way of the sustained mood. I would say that the stage, as a faithful vehicle of mood, falls as far short of the novel as the cinema falls short of the stage. All Art admittedly depends on craft, on the sort of devising which we call technique ; even the novel, that most liberal and elastic medium, has its own severities, makes its own rigorous demands on ingenuity, dramatic instinct, and selective power—but they are difficulties to be overcome in a strict privacy, by the writer steeped in his mood, camped on his theme without interference. In writing for the stage the cramp of a hundred and one extra influences comes into play, device becomes trick work, selection is dictated to by physical conditions beyond control. The confirmed novelist, accustomed to freedom and his own conscience, is often given to impatience, and a measure of contempt towards

even his own writing for the stage. That merely means, as a rule, that he does not realize the basic difference between the two forms. And, however good a novelist such an one may be, he will inevitably be an indifferent dramatist. A form must " enthuse " one, as the Americans say, before one can do it justice. One cannot approach the stage successfully without profound respect, and a deep recognition that its conditions are the essentials of an appeal totally distinct from that of the novel.

I do not think that Conrad was ignorant of this—not at all. His shortcomings were due, partly, to the almost insuperable difficulties of adaptation, and, partly, to inadequate mastery of trick work which has to be learned. In other words, he had not given enough time to the dramatic form. He did not quite know how to balance his effects, how to economize his words, or how to keep his line of action clear and inevitable. A little more experience would have shown him, for instance, that the *salon* scene, as written, in his dramatic version of *The Secret Agent* was dead wood.

I read his adaptation in manuscript before the play was produced, and in answer to a somewhat critical letter, received one which

contains passages that should, I think, be put on record :

" My general attitude finally was this : That considering that very likely I will never write another play, that I can't have any pretensions to dramatic gifts, though I have my own ideas as to the artistic reproductions of life, that the rules of any art contain in their summarized expression as much error as truth, and also a certain admixture of completely unreasonable prejudice (as, for instance, in the art of painting the not quite one hundred years' old pronouncement of a famous connoisseur that ' a picture to be good should be brown like an old fiddle ')—that, considering all this, I could allow free play to my temperament, attending only to the plain sense and clear connexion of the story . . . I resolved, in short, to write a Conrad play, not straining stage conditions unduly for the sake of originality, but stretching them out to my conception for the sake of that freedom (possibly in wrong directions) by which no art is ever injured. . . .

" I have often felt that not only the third but the second act should come out altogether. After all, why the Professor ? Why the Assistant Commissioner ? Even Inspector Heat himself would be sufficiently characterized by

his appearance in the third act, if it were not for the actual subject of the play. . . . The subject is *not* the murder of Mr. Verloc by his wife and what subsequently happens to her. It is all a matter of *feeling*, without which the existence of Mrs. Verloc's mother as a personage in the play could not be very well justified. For, after all, what is that old woman doing there? She too could be eliminated; and also Mr. Vladimir. Indeed I was tempted, or I might have been tempted, to begin the play with the three delightful anarchs sitting in the parlour round the fire, and Mr. Verloc explaining to them the circumstances which force him to throw a bomb at some building or other, discussing ways and means, and ending the effective scene by taking Stevie by the scruff of the neck, 'Come along, youngster, you carry the bomb,' and Comrade Ossipon blowing a kiss as they all go out at the door, to Mrs. Verloc, who stands horrorstruck in the middle of the stage. Curtain. From there one could go, direct, without changing a word to the third scene of the fourth act, and on to the end, obtaining a rather pretty Guignol play with no particular trouble.

"All this is perfectly direct and certainly would not lag by the way; but it would miss

altogether the subject of the play, which in its nature, I mean the play, is purely illustrative. It is because of that nature that I have let it spread itself into scenes which from the point of action alone may, and obviously do, appear superfluous and detached from the subject. Whereas to my feeling they are all closely to the point.

" I admit that I wrote the play to be acted, but at the same time I will tell you frankly that I look with no pleasurable anticipation to seeing it on the stage. The mere thought of what a perfectly well-meaning actor may make in the way of conventionalized villain of my Professor, which I assure you is quite a serious attempt to illustrate a mental and emotional state which had its weight in the affairs of the world, gives me a little shudder."

This is Conrad's defence of the play as it stands. It is weighty, but does not go quite to the root of the matter, for all the feeling and illustrative value as he put into the play would have been preserved, and could even have been increased, by the elimination of *longueurs*, if his technique had been equal to the task ; in other words, if he had given some of the years he gave to the novel to writing drama instead. And, anyway, the mood and

illustrative value of his theme did not and could not receive as full expression in the play as it did in the novel.

So that it comes back to this : one is glad he didn't give time enough to play-writing. Those of us who remember that amazing cab drive in the novel—the gem passage of *The Secret Agent*—unrenderable on the stage, realize very well that his time was better concentrated on an unfettered fidelity to his moods in his unflinching scrutiny of men and things, on his power of painting in words, and on a psychological insight unsurpassed for depth and subtlety.

Of the actual production of *The Secret Agent*, which I thought left much to be desired, Conrad wrote with his characteristic generosity : " Now it is all over, my state may be described as that of serene joy, only marred by remorse at the injustice of my past thoughts towards the actors, who had a lot of characters certainly not of a ' stock ' kind thrown at their heads just twenty days before the first performance. Now, like a man touched by grace, I think of them with actual tenderness and almost with affection. . . .

" The disagreeable part of this business is to see wasted the hard work of people who

depend on it for their livelihood, and for whom success would mean assured employment and ease of mind. One feels guilty somehow."

There spoke the heart of Conrad, for ever in sympathy with men and women who did their job as well as they could, and thinking of others before himself.

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

September, 1924.

LAUGHING ANNE

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF PERSONAGES IN THE PLAY

DAVIDSON: About 35. Plump, round face, little fair moustache. Fair hair parted on the side. Very quiet manner and voice, with a sort of habitual half-smile. Is dressed in the usual tropical white drill suit, tunic and trousers. From second button of tunic to the left side pocket a gold watch-chain across his breast. White shoes and white tropical helmet. As general definition, a kindly "delicate soul in a comfortable envelope."

HOLLIS: 40. Dark, clean-shaven, close-cropped. Same kind of clothes as Davidson. (These two men are well groomed; their white clothes spotlessly got up.)

BAMTZ: Lanky, long, loose, black beard streaked with grey over his breast. Dressed in white trousers with belt. Grey shirt. No collar. Linen jacket worn open. All this dingy. Pair of old white shoes. Lounging, casual, lazy bearing. Drawling voice. Propensity to cringe.

FECTOR: Short. A shaven, sour, little red face. Nervous, impudent bearing. Dress:

white trousers and a very old shooting jacket (which he had brought with him years ago from home). Shabby brown shoes.

NAKHODA: Smooth, round, yellow face with thickish dark lips and thin drooping moustache—a few hairs only on face. Dress: a tunic like Davidson's, only instead of being white it must be made of very thin blue flannel. Instead of trousers, a Malay sarong of common check pattern (or any other for that matter). On head a small round skull-cap. On his bare brown feet a pair of patent-leather slippers. Jaunty, fatuous bearing.

(The above three men have the common characteristic of slight jumpiness.)

MAN WITHOUT HANDS: Need not be actually tall and stout but must give the impression of a *big* man. Large face, with rather long black hair brushed up from a high forehead. Black eyes. Moves ponderously. Dress: white trousers cut very broad at hip, very narrow at ankle, held up at waist by a faded sash. He has no shirt, but only a thin singlet, over which he wears open a roomy linen jacket with side pockets. White shoes. Overbearing manner. Deep voice.

ANNE : In First Act. A faded pink princess robe with a train and some ragged white lace trimming at neck and sleeves. (Last remnant of her old outfit.) Hair untidy. Old white satin shoes.

In Second Act. A piece of chintz made up like a chemise dress with straps over shoulders. Head tied in a red handkerchief and hair loose down her back. Straw slippers on bare feet. Necklace of yellow beads.

TONY : Dingy white blouse and short knickers, bare legs and feet. Sunburnt. Head of tight chestnut curls.

ACT I

SCENE represents back verandah of Macao Hotel, seen from the interior. At the back the columns of the verandah with creepers and view of the sky, between the supports of the verandah there is a balustrade ; end-on to the audience two tables, of which one is covered with a white cloth. Remnants of a meal and a couple of glasses. Abreast of those tables and close to the balustrade, right and left, there are invisible stairs leading down to the ground. Right and left towards the proscenium two white-washed walls, of which the left has got a half-glazed door and the right just a common door nearly flush with the wall.

DAVIDSON *and* HOLLIS *sitting at table.* DAVIDSON'S *helmet and* HOLLIS'S *white cap on the floor. From time to time a slight breath of air stirs the creepers on the column. The light should be suggestive of bright sunshine outside.*

HOLLIS : Here we have been yarning of old times for an hour or so in this damned Macao Hotel and I never asked you why you frequent such a place.

DAVIDSON : I don't frequent it. Never been here before in my life, but my ship is in dry

dock. There is no cooking on board a ship in dry dock, and as I didn't want to go back to town I thought I would try to get a bite here. It's a low place but I don't suppose they put poison in one's dishes because one's a stranger.

HOLLIS (*Dry tone*): No. Many a stranger has been drugged here though, and rooked of all his cash. Every shady loafer, ruffian and scallywag in the Islands finds his way to this place sooner or later. Don't you remember how we used to warn young fellows against being enticed in here. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you at the door. I wouldn't have liked to be seen coming in here. Not by myself. With you it's another matter.

DAVIDSON (*Faint smile*): Why?

HOLLIS (*Jocular*): Because no breath of suspicion ever rested on you. (*Laughs a little.*) My dear fellow, don't you remember how we used to call you "good Davidson," "good Davy." To your own face, too.

DAVIDSON (*Placid*): There was a lot of chaff flying about amongst our lot.

HOLLIS (*Reminiscent*): Wild lot, too, we were. But you were the quietest.

DAVIDSON: Old times, now . . . (*Sighs.*)

HOLLIS (*Pursuing his idea. With a sort of eagerness, elbows on table*): Do you remember that clever naturalist chap that now and then chummed with us. He said of you once that he had never seen such a kind soul in such a comfortable envelope. Ha! Ha! Ha! Comfortable envelope! That was good.

DAVIDSON (*Wipes his forehead with his handkerchief*): Phew! It's hot! He had his own style of joking. He is a great scientific man at home now. I have got his famous book on board my ship. Phew! The heat!

HOLLIS: We are more likely to get a little air from the sea at the back here than in the front of the house. And anyhow I wouldn't like to be seen in public here, though, of course, with you it wouldn't matter so much.

DAVIDSON (*Placid smile*): Am I so very respectable?

HOLLIS: No, no. I don't mean that, I mean just good. Exactly as in the old days . . . You look it, you know.

DAVIDSON (*Mock resignation*): I can't help my looks.

HOLLIS: No, you can't. Any more than the rest of us could help being wild and looking it too.

DAVIDSON (*Placid smile*): Lively, lively. Good fellows tho'.

HOLLIS: Where are they all? Scattered to the four winds of heaven.

DAVIDSON (*Leaning on his elbow*): Aye. Not enough ballast, most of them. And Harry was the most flighty of the lot. You remember Harry the Pearler?

HOLLIS: Why! Yes. The fellow with a girl of his own. He brought her out here from Western Australia or somewhere that way. She was a good sort too. But those are old times and no mistake. I wonder what became of her.

DAVIDSON (*Wiping brow*): Phew! The heat! I fancy Harry dropped her. One used to hear of Laughing Anne turning up here and there amongst the Islands. The name stuck to her.

HOLLIS (*Surprised*): You heard it lately?

DAVIDSON: Oh, dear no! She vanished

years ago ; and Harry the Pearler is dead, and I suppose there is nobody to remember him now but you and I. And yet we two are not so very old.

HOLLIS : Years in the tropics count double, my boy. We have kept wonderfully. But the most wonderful thing is that you and I should come together in this place which is notoriously the rendezvous of all sorts of bad characters for a thousand miles round.

DAVIDSON : I tell you I came here to get something to eat, while waiting for my ship to come out of dock. (*Above the level of the floor to the left of* HOLLIS'S *chair appears the head of* FECTOR *in an old grey felt hat.*)

HOLLIS : Same old ship, I suppose ?

DAVIDSON : Oh, yes . . . Ten or twelve years now. Nice little ship. I've got very fond of her.

HOLLIS (*Dreamily*) : Yes. Same old Islands, same old reefs, same old worries, same old trade.

DAVIDSON (*Placid*) : Pretty well. Only I don't worry now. I can find my way about this part of the world with my eyes shut. However,

this trip will be out of the common. It is going to be a dollar-collecting trip amongst other things. I expect I will have sixty thousand of them before I am done . . . You know, packed in wooden cases.

HOLLIS (*Moves his chair a bit and* FECTOR'S *head vanishes instantly*) : I wouldn't talk loudly about it in a place like this.

DAVIDSON : Why ? You seem as bad as my wife. She is quite nervous about the danger. (*Laughs placidly.*) I told her that there are no pirates nowadays in the Archipelago, except in boys' books.

HOLLIS : Well, no. All the same in a den like this I wouldn't . . .

DAVIDSON : What's the matter ? Sixty thousand dollars in cases is not a job for a pick-pocket, is it ? I am having one of the ship's store-rooms fitted for the purpose of putting those cases in. (*While* DAVIDSON *is speaking the half-glazed door comes open a little way and* FECTOR *puts his head through. He withdraws it at once but leaves the door ajar. The faint clicking of billiard-balls is heard periodically.*)

HOLLIS (*Grimly*) : The crowd that drinks

here wouldn't be up to piracy. Not they. Regular shore-sweepings they are. I noticed one or two notorious characters on the front verandah. That fellow Fector who calls himself a journalist, was one.

DAVIDSON (*Surprised*): A journalist!

HOLLIS (*Scornful*): He calls himself a journalist as some receivers of stolen goods call themselves marine dealers. He has been kicked and horsewhipped in every place from Aden to Shanghai for a swindler and blackmailer . . . And I am hanged if I didn't catch sight in the bar of a loafer I thought was dead long ago. Surely you would have heard of Bamtz.

DAVIDSON (*Doubtful*): Didn't he have a great beard?

HOLLIS: Horrid. That's how I recognized him. Same old beard. There was never such a beard seen from here to Polynesia, where you can sell a beard for hard cash any day. But Bamtz used his beard for prestige—you know. There was a tale going of him wheedling trading privileges once from the late Sultan of Sulu on the strength of his beard. Damn it all! One can understand a fellow living by cadging and small swindles in towns, in large

communities of people, but Bamtz has been doing that trick for years in the wilderness. Cadging for his living on the edge of the virgin forest! Of course he isn't the sort that would hurt a fly. He would be afraid to tackle a fly. (*Confused noise of voices through the door which is ajar.*)

HOLLIS (*Looks over his shoulder, gets up, shuts the door. Comes back to his seat*): Didn't notice that door wasn't shut. . . . Bamtz does look like a pirate, I must say, but he calls himself an accountant, book-keeper, or something of that sort. (*Left door opens and* FECTOR *lounges in, hands in pockets, jaunty, advances to table.*) Now, what do you want here?

FECTOR (*Assumed dignity*): This is a public place.

HOLLIS: You can't ferret out anything here you could sell.

FECTOR: What do you take me for?

HOLLIS: Eavesdropper, blackmailer, forger —take your choice.

FECTOR (*Reeling a little as if drunk*): Oh, yes, yes. I am used to hear that sort of thing.

Every man with a mission is insulted. My mission always was to track out abuses and fight them. And I won't be driven out. This is the coolest place in the blamed den and I am going to sit here. (*Reels slightly to the other table, sits down, throws his arms on the table and rests his head on them.*)

HOLLIS (*Low tone*) : This is impossible. . . . Shall we go ? (*Gets up.*)

DAVIDSON (*Who has been wiping his forehead, getting matches, cigar, lighting it and taking puffs, pulls out handkerchief, wipes his forehead*) : It's too frightfully hot yet. I think I will sit here for another hour before I go to the dock. (*Slight snore from* FECTOR.) I don't mind him.

HOLLIS (*With a look at* FECTOR. *Tone of disgust*) : I didn't know he drank too. I can't stand that beast. . . . (*Persuasive.*) We could drive to town together.

DAVIDSON : I can't. I must walk over to the ship presently to see about that store-room for the dollars. I expect to have forty or more cases on my return trip. (*He gets up to shake hands.*)

HOLLIS (*Affectionate*) : Well, good luck to

you, Davidson. We may not come across each other again very soon. It was good to have a yarn with you about old times. (*Ready to go.*)

DAVIDSON (*Cordial*): Yes. . . . I say! Won't you go and see my wife? She would know your name in a moment.

HOLLIS (*Moving towards the stairs right. Jocular*): Do you mean to say that you talk to your wife of old times? (*Moves off laughing.*)

DAVIDSON (*Calls out after* HOLLIS *placidly*): She is all right.

(*Exit* HOLLIS. FECTOR *who had raised his head slightly while the others were taking leave of each other drops it on his arms at once.* DAVIDSON *sits down heavily, giving a glance at* FECTOR *and goes on smoking. After a pause* FECTOR *raises himself, gets up, sways very slightly.*)

FECTOR (*Thickly*): Captain Davidson, I believe. (DAVIDSON *nods.*) Of the steamship "Sissie." (DAVIDSON *hardly nods.*) One of the most respected shipmasters in port. Allow me to ask . . .

DAVIDSON (*Placid*): No use. I won't give you a drink. You have had enough already.

FECTOR (*Pulls out a small pad and pencil from his pocket*) : I only wanted to ask your opinion of this new currency scheme.

DAVIDSON (*Mildly*) : Oh, get out.

FECTOR (*Change of bearing and venomous tone*) : That's what I am going to do. I am going out. Heat or no heat. . . . Where the devil's my hat ? (*Exit into the billiard-room, slams door behind him, leaving* DAVIDSON *astonished. But very soon* DAVIDSON *wipes his brow again, breeze rustles the creepers,* DAVIDSON *takes a deep breath.*)

DAVIDSON : That's better. (*Dozes lightly, cigar drops out of his fingers, the door on right opens, and* ANNE *puts her head out, perceives a man there, draws her head in, then puts it out again, looks hard at* DAVIDSON, *then comes out, shuts the door after her and approaches him step by step. Stops, peers, throws her arms up, claps her hands in extreme wonder.*)

ANNE : My God ! It's Davy ! (*Somewhat shrill.*)

DAVIDSON (*Wakes up with a start, jumps up amazed*) : What, what's this ?

ANNE (*Advances, arms extended, seizes him by*

the shoulders) : Why, you have hardly changed at all. The same good Davy. (*Characteristic clear laugh, a little wild.*)

DAVIDSON (*Starts in all his limbs. Awed tone of voice*) : You—you are Laughing Anne !

ANNE (*Approaching her face to his a little*) : All that's left of her, Davy . . . all that's left of her. (*Her hands slip off* DAVIDSON'S *shoulders, head droops. Suddenly she fumbles in pocket for rag of handkerchief, puts it to her eyes, choked voice.*) It's years since I heard myself called by that name. (*Drops hands again.*)

DAVIDSON (*Looking all round, ceiling, floor, walls, still awe-struck*) : Where on earth did you come from ?

ANNE : From that room.

DAVIDSON (*Dazed*) : Room ? Where ? What room ?

ANNE (*Short peal of laughter*) : Through that door—there.

DAVIDSON : A door ? Can't be ! (*Recovering himself.*) Oh, that door ! I thought I was dreaming.

ANNE: No dream, Davy! It's I in the flesh. The very Laughing Anne . . . (*Break in voice. Desolate.*) Oh, Davy! Harry ought not to have cast me off. It's he who led me astray.

DAVIDSON (*Sympathetic. Grave face*): He died some years ago. Perhaps you heard?

ANNE (*Nods slightly*): Yes, I heard. (*They look at each other with a sort of desolation, meantime the door on the right opens and a small boy of about six or seven runs out and catches hold of* ANNE'S *skirt.*)

DAVIDSON (*Starts back*): What's this?

ANNE (*Laugh*): Why! Don't you know a small boy when you see him, Davy? (*Tone of anguish.*) That's my Tony.

DAVIDSON (*Very low, after looking at the child*): Harry's.

ANNE (*Also very low*): No. Another's. What would you have? What was I to do? (*Changed tone to the child.*) Say how do you do to the good gentleman.

BOY (*Extending grimy paw to* DAV. *Merrily and quite unabashed*): Bonjour.

DAVIDSON : Eh ? (*Lets go of boy's hand suddenly and looks distracted.*)

ANNE : Run away now. That's a good boy. (*Exit child.*)

DAVIDSON : Can't he speak English ?

ANNE : Oh, yes, he is picking it up. Some dear old French people in Saigon were taking care of him for me. I picked up with the skipper of a German ship, and was going with him up and down the China Sea. Then at the end of two years or so he tells me " this is all over, mein taubchen. I must go home and marry the girl I am engaged to." He didn't look very happy about it, so I laughed and went ashore. We parted friends, but oh, Davy ! it was no laughing matter for me. I had to take the boy away from those French people who were going back to France ; and there I was. I was tired of life and down on my luck, I can tell you, when a fellow called Bamtz turned up. I suppose even such as he want company.

DAVIDSON (*Making a movement of dismay*) : You—are—with Bamtz ? (*Shocked.*)

ANNE (*Nods*) : Yes, I know. But it was for the kid. How could I have kept him with me

if I had to knock about in towns? And this Bamtz is not a brute. He seems real fond of him. . . . I suppose I ought to thank God for that.

DAVIDSON (*Exclaims with feeling*): Thank God for Bamtz! (*Drop in voice.*) My poor Anne.

ANNE (*With a reckless wave of her arm*): For the boy! . . . So I gave him the few poor little trinkets I had to sell and he took me away to a little native place three hundred miles from here where no white man ever comes. The Rajah there has given us a big hut to live in. There is nothing but forests all round, Davy, but like this the boy needn't ever know that his mother was a painted woman.

DAVIDSON (*Anxious tone*): But what brought you here?

ANNE: We got a passage in a native boat. Bamtz thinks he could manage to trade enough to keep body and soul together—the three of us, out there—in the forest—out of men's sight, if he could only get a ship to call for produce now and then. Twice a year would do. Oh, Davy, you have a ship. You can do what you like; God has put you in my way. Say yes,

Davy, just twice a year and that will be enough for us to live on. Shall I fetch him out to you now so that he hears it from your own mouth. Yes? . . . (*Runs lightly to the door of the billiard-room, puts her head in. Clicking of billiard-balls heard.*)

DAVIDSON (*Irresolute*): Wait. (BAMTZ *comes through the door shutting it behind him. Slight check at sight of* DAVIDSON, *one hand in his pocket.* ANNE *drags at his other arm.*)

ANNE: Come along. Captain Davidson will be our friend.

BAMTZ (*Jerks arm away, puts other hand in pocket. Weak face, long streaked beard, seems as if unscrewed at the waist, careless lounging attitudes which conceal his propensity to cringe. Advances towards* DAVIDSON, *who is looking at him fixedly*): Good morning, Captain.

DAVIDSON (*Looking at him keenly, but in a placid voice*): She tells me that you think you have some prospects of trade over there where you live.

BAMTZ (*Drawling*): Prospects . . . Yaas. I know how to manage the natives, and there's

a little capital—if you would only promise to call for produce.

DAVIDSON: You know you will have to behave decently.

ANNE: He has been always kind, only . . . (*Makes a movement with her hand.*)

BAMTZ (*Looking in the air and as if speaking to himself. Drawling*): A pinch of dollars in hand —a cheap necklace—a set of bangles—a brooch or two . . . Here's . . . (*Jerks head at* ANNE) capital.

DAVIDSON (*With a sort of grim placidity*): I see. (*Reflects.*) I could probably arrange a call, only . . .

ANNE (*Clasping her hands*): Say yes, Davy. Think of that poor kid.

BAMTZ (*With a little more interest in his voice, to* DAVIDSON): Seen him, Captain? Cute little customer. (*Returns to listless attitude.*)

DAVIDSON: Suppose you leave me with her for a moment. (BAMTZ *makes a move at once.*) You had better keep clear now of that billiard-room.

BAMTZ (*Lounging off, hands in pockets*): Yaas,

a low lot in there. I never cared for them, but sometimes one must . . . (*Lounges off into bedroom.*)

DAVIDSON (*Placidly anxious*): Would you trust him? Do you think you could stick it out?

ANNE (*Moves lightly to billiard-room door and turns the key saying*): A lot of these beasts there. Eavesdropping too. We have been here four days. . . . (*With ardour.*) No more paint and dyes for me, Davy, if you will do what he asks you to do. Stick it out? Can't I! You know I have always stuck to my men through thick and thin, till they had enough of me. And now look at what's left of me. But inside I am what I always was. I have acted on the square to them, one after another. I was a pal worth having. But men do get tired of one. They don't understand women. (*Characteristic short peal of laughter.*)

DAVIDSON (*Placidly anxious*): Don't, Anne.

ANNE (*Puts handkerchief to her eyes and sobs, while the door of the billiard-room is tried from outside and then shaken a bit*): Harry is the only man I ever loved. He ought not to have cast me off.

DAVIDSON (*Quiet feeling*): Well, I will be your friend. Tell Bamtz to expect me in a month's time. Keep him clear of that crowd and get away from here as quick as ever you can.

ANNE: We can leave to-night in a native boat. Trust me. (*Seizing his hands and shaking them.*) It's for the kid, Davy. It's for the kid. (*Moves towards bedroom. At door turns round to say*): Isn't he a bright little chap?

(DAVIDSON *wipes his forehead with pocket handkerchief. Looks at watch. While he is doing these things the door of the billiard-room is shaken again. He gives it a mere glance, puts his watch in his pocket. Picks his hat from the floor and goes downstairs right. Almost directly after,* FECTOR'S *head appears up the stairs left and seeing there is no one there he strides straight to the billiard-room door, turns the key.*)

FECTOR: I wonder who locked that door. (*Reflects.*) Would it be Bamtz. Hullo! Bamtz! You there? (*Waits.*) I got a dollar for you. (*Door of the bedroom comes ajar and voice of* BAMTZ *is heard.*)

BAMTZ: Let me go and see. (*Comes out and*

at once assumes his lounging, casual, hesitating bearing.) What's that you said ?

FECTOR (*Dollar in hand*) : Your winnings, I believe.

BAMTZ (*Looking into the air*) : Oh, yaas ! (*Extends open palm.*)

FECTOR (*Putting dollar in his pocket*) : You damned fraud, you knew you had no winnings . . . I only want to talk to you.

BAMTZ (*Concealing his discomfiture and sidling away*) : I'm not interested—ah—in your talk.

FECTOR : You will jolly well have to be. Why did you lock that door ?

BAMTZ (*Alarmed*) : I didn't. I swear I didn't.

FECTOR : You have been plotting something in there with that woman you have got in tow. You haven't the right to lock any door in this house. It's offensive. This is a public place. Don't you want to keep friendly with the crowd ?

BAMTZ (*Desperate*) : I don't want to be friends with any of you. I am done with you. Yaas. (*Impressively.*) I had a business inter-

view here with Captain Davidson and I am glad the door was locked—whoever locked it.

FECTOR: Captain Davidson?

BAMTZ (*Superior*): Yaas.

FECTOR: Were you trying to cadge something out of him? Well, I'm hanged! . . . No! Don't go . . . Stop right here.

BAMTZ (*Reluctant*): Don't worry me. I'll have none of your tricks. I'm going to be a merchant—on the square.

FECTOR: Oh, you liar!

BAMTZ: Fact. Deal in island produce. Been discussing freights with Captain Davidson. That's the sort of man I am. He's going to call for the first lot in about a month's time.

FECTOR (*Shout of astonishment*): No! (BAMTZ *shuffling away towards the door puts his hand on the handle.*) Here! Don't go!

BAMTZ: I will have no truck with you. (*Exit.*)

FECTOR (*Stands for a moment, chin in hand, obvious hesitation, then dashes at billiard-room door, puts his head in, withdraws it with exclam-*

ation) : Gone. (*Runs to balustrade and shouts into garden.*) Hey, hey ! . . . Yes, both of you. Come up here a moment. (*He walks front of stage and stands biting his fingers nervously, while up the stairs to left big bulk of* MAN WITHOUT HANDS *rises up, followed by the* NAKHODA. *They stand behind* FECTOR, M.W.H. *frowning, with his stumps rammed deep into the side pockets of jacket ;* NAKHODA *with a sort of fatuous smile.*)

M.W.H. (*Deep voice*) : Well ! (*Waits.*) What's this infernal joke ?

FECTOR (*Walking up and down across the stage in agony of indecision*) : There's a damned big job . . . as big as a mountain.

M.W.H. (*Angry bellow*) : Out with it, then.

FECTOR (*At a distance. Wringing his hands*) : I don't know whether I ought to trust you fellows. (*Stands still suddenly.*)

M.W.H. (*Advancing ponderously at* FECTOR, *who quails, but also seems fascinated*) : You wouldn't dare to insult me if it hadn't been for my misfortune. (*Turns away towards front of stage raising his stumps and shaking them before him. Looking up to heaven with fury.*) If I

had my way, you up there would be damned too. Then you would know how I feel.

FECTOR: Don't blaspheme.

M.W.H. (*Turns on him*): If I could kill people with my eyes you wouldn't dare speak to me like this.

FECTOR: You manage to make me feel deadly sick with your beastly eyes. (*Quails but holds his ground.*)

M.W.H. (*Deep voice*): Out with your story —if you have one.

FECTOR (*Passing him quickly to move to other side of the stage*): I suppose I must. Listen. (M.W.H. *spins round and* NAKHODA, *who persistently keeps at his elbow, preserves his fatuous air.*) There will be in a month's time a ship, a little trading ship, travelling about the Java Sea with something like 80,000 dollars aboard of her.

M.W.H. (*Contemptuous*): Well, what of it? What's the good of it to anybody. There must be lots of ships with dollars—and gold in them too—afloat on the seas at this very moment.

FECTOR: Yes, but I know where that par-

ticular ship will be next month—the exact spot. A lonely spot. Inhabited by an ass called Bamtz.

M.W.H. (*Walking up and down and gesticulating with his stumps*): Bamtz! Bamtz! I know him inside out. A mere rag—dirty rag. We could do what we like with him.

NAKHODA: He's sailing with me to-night. I am giving him a passage to his home.

FECTOR (*Strikes in*): Which is the very spot.

M.W.H.: Then, we must ask him for hospitality. (*Laughs.*) He is not a man that ever refuses anything to anybody. Man! He's a worm.

FECTOR: Eighty thousand dollars!

NAKHODA: That's twenty thousand each. Four of us. Including Bamtz.

M.W.H.: You can't know how elated a poor cripple feels at the prospect of a little activity. (*Ferocious.*) You will have to go through with it now. I will keep your livers sweet for you. (*To* NAKHODA.) Isn't it time to get your passengers on board?

NAKHODA : Yes, we sail early to-night. I promised to come for them.

FECTOR : Well, here we are then. You *have* come for them. Go and get them out. (*While* NAKHODA *goes to knock at the door on right* FECTOR *and* M.W.H. *withdraw to left side and watch the performance. Dusk falls.* NAKHODA *knocks again.*)

NAKHODA (*Speaking at the door*) : Time to go on board. (*The door opens and a voice from within says*) : We have been waiting for you (*and* BAMTZ *comes out first carrying a very dilapidated valise in his hand and wearing a ragged overcoat over his white clothes. Behind him* ANNE *in very shabby tussore long coat over the pink gown. She carries a bundle tied up in a check cloth and a native basket, and with the other hand leads* TONY. *They make for the stairs.* NAKHODA *watches them*).

M.W.H. (*Quiet voice across the verandah*) : Bamtz.

BAMTZ (*Starts, and is so upset that he drops the valise on the floor and leans his back against the wall*) : What do you want ?

M.W.H. (*Speaking across the verandah*) : I

am going to resume my activities and as I happen to need your help your fortune is as good as made.

BAMTZ: For God's sake do leave me alone. I am no good for anything. I have no nerve. . . . Never had any.

M.W.H. (*Moving across ponderously. Soft voice*): What *is* the matter? Can't you entertain a few friends in your new home for a few days?

BAMTZ: Keep off me. Go away. Leave me alone. I won't have it.

M.W.H. (*Soft*): Won't you? Not even for a stake of about 20,000 dollars or so?

BAMTZ: I know you of old. You were then worse than the devil himself.

M.W.H. (*Taking his stumps out of his pocket and putting them close to* BAMTZ'S *face*): See this? Well, since my misfortune I am ten times worse than before. Now then, go ahead. Move on. March. (*Terrible voice.*) Crawl, you worm. (TONY *begins to cry.* M.W.H. *seems to take notice of* ANNE *for the first time.*) Why! He's a family man. That's excellent.

ANNE (*To the whimpering child*): Don't be frightened, Tony. He will do you no harm. (BAMTZ *has gone downstairs*, NAK. *has followed him and* M.W.H. *remains standing at head of stairs looking towards* ANNE.)

M.W.H.: You have a nice voice. I am sure you will make us comfortable. (*Half jeering.*) In your retired home.

ANNE (*Passionately*): Ah, if he were only half a man! . . . Don't cry, Tony. It's all right.

M.W.H.: Yes, if he were. I fancy you must be the better man of the two. Never mind. It suits me first rate. You'll be friends with me. A helpless, miserable cripple longing for a companion to take care of him . . . always. (*Puts his arm over* ANNE'S *shoulder and with the stump against her cheek turns her face round and looks into it.*) Frightened? No need to be. I am a harmless cripple. (*Takes arm off and gives her a push towards the stairs. As* ANNE, TONY, FECTOR *and* M.W.H. *move off in single file*, CURTAIN *falls.*)

ACT II: Scene 1

INTERIOR of a hut with walls of mats, unequally divided by a partition of rough mats. Wooden posts visible in corners. The biggest portion has an open doorway in wall at back and open doorway in dividing partition. Smaller part containing one keg, and bed-place made of wooden cases. Nightlight burning on the floor. Larger part contains oblong table in middle, four wooden chairs round it. On the table glasses, bottle, red earthenware jug, two candles. Fector, Nakhoda, Bamtz, *and* M.W.H. *sitting on chairs playing cards.* Anne *holding* M.W.H.'s *cards for him stands by his chair. The men are dressed as before.* Anne *in loose chintz wrapper and straw slippers on bare feet. Her head tied up Malay fashion in red handkerchief, with mass of loose hair hanging behind. Long necklace of amber beads hangs on her uncovered neck.*

M.W.H.: Play the king of hearts.

Tony (*In cot in other room. Plaintive voice*): Mama.

Anne (*Throwing the cards down*): Coming, dear. (*Passes into the other room. Seen bend-*

ing over cot. M.W.H., FECTOR, NAKHODA, BAMTZ, *throw down cards.*)

M.W.H.: The time is drawing near. Now, listen to me once more. (*Four heads in a bunch. Loud whispering, during which, without any noise,* DAVIDSON *appears in the outer doorway, white cap, white clothes. Stands gazing till* BAMTZ *looking up sees him and rises abruptly from his chair.*)

BAMTZ (*Staring. Loud*): Captain Davidson. (*In other room* ANNE *seen turning her head.*)

DAVIDSON (*Grim but placid*): I haven't startled you, have I?

ANNE (*In bedroom doorway*): Davy! Heaven itself sends you here to-night.

BAMTZ (*Dropping back into his chair. Loud voice*): Come in, Captain. (*Falters.*) Come in.

ANNE (*Extended arms towards* DAVIDSON): My Tony's so bad. (*Seizes* DAVIDSON *by arm and tugs at it.*) Come along and see him. (M.W.H. *leans back in chair.* FECTOR *sits sideways, arm thrown over back of his chair.* NAKHODA *back to audience.* BAMTZ, *with appear-*

ance of extreme nervousness, looks up at ANNE *and* DAVIDSON *as they pass by.*)

BAMTZ: Poor little beggar.

DAVIDSON (*Leaning over cot*): We want a better light here.

ANNE: Yes, Davy. (*Goes into big room, snatches up candle.*)

FECTOR (*Scandalized*): Hullo! Hullo!

M.W.H.: Let her have it. (*Meantime* ANNE *passes in and with* DAVIDSON *examines child by light of candle.*)

DAVIDSON: He is a little hot. Don't you worry. Could you boil a little water for a drink?

ANNE: I have nothing here.

DAVIDSON (*Very loud*): I will just go on board and bring you a spirit kettle and some medicine that will do him good. (*Changed tone with movement of head towards the other room.*) What's this, Anne?

ANNE (*Makes a gesture of raising hands and drops them*): They would come.

DAVIDSON (*Very loud*): There is no danger whatever. (*Low voice.*) I am afraid this bodes no good to you, my poor girl. What do you think they are up to?

ANNE (*Speaking very quickly*): They are after the dollars you have in your ship.

DAVIDSON (*Surprised but cautious*): How on earth did they know I carry dollars on this trip?

ANNE (*Intense*): So you *have* dollars on board. Oh, Davy! Take your ship away quick.

DAVIDSON: Too late. The tide has left her already. Do they actually mean robbery? What do they take me for?

ANNE: That big man without hands wouldn't stick at murder. He is driving them on. He is a devil. If Tony hadn't been in this state I would have run away with him into the woods anywhere. . . . Oh, Davy! Will he die?

DAVIDSON: No, no. Don't get yourself in a state. You used to be plucky.

ANNE (*Very quick*): My pluck. It seems to be going. Ha—ha—ha. (*Little wild laugh.* DAVIDSON *passes to the other room where all the*

men at sound of ANNE'S *laugh had turned their heads in a somewhat startled way.* ANNE *follows him with the candle, which she puts on the table, and returns to the child.*)

FECTOR: Will you join us in a drink, Captain?

DAVIDSON: I am in a hurry to fetch some drugs I have on board. (*Passes through doorway at the back. All get up from their seats except* M.W.H. *who remains leaning back in his chair.*)

M.W.H.: Now, get out all of you and see where the ship is moored—at the jetty or along the bank. We ought to know beforehand.

FECTOR: One of us would do.

M.W.H.: No. I want each of you to know exactly where to put his foot when we board her in the dark, presently. You are such nervous skunks that you will be missing the gangway from sheer funk. I suppose when the time comes I will have to push you on—I! A miserable cripple! But when it comes to sharing, each of you will want his share.

FECTOR (*Muttering*): Certainly. (*Loud.*)

Confound you, you bully us here from morning to night as if you had hired us for the job, whereas when it comes to it you won't be able to do anything.

M.W.H. (*Shaking his stumps in front of his face*): Curse my misfortune. (*With affected, savage cringing.*) I hope you won't try to cut down my share because I am a poor helpless, useless cripple. (*Ferocious.*) Get out and do what I tell you or else there will be nothing to share.

FECTOR: I will be glad when the job's over, if only to be done with your bullying.

BAMTZ: Oh God, yes! (M.W.H. *jumps up.* FECTOR *and* BAMTZ *make for the door, while* NAKHODA *dodges behind* M.W.H. *and is the last to go out.*)

M.W.H. (*Standing by the table*): Anne! (ANNE *in the other room raises her head from the cot with an air of terror.*) Anne! Here!

ANNE (*Springs up from her knees*): Oh, what is it now? (*Walks reluctant into the large room.*)

M.W.H.: Now, then, pull yourself together. Where is that weight? Did you sneak it from the store?

ANNE (*Faltering*): I have got it there. (*Points to corner.*)

M.W.H.: Quick, then. Lose no time. Got a piece of string? (ANNE *stands stock-still with a face of despair.*) Ain't you going to be loyal to me? Don't you think I am man enough to be worth sticking to if I have no hands? (*Threatening.*) You have got to stick to me. What are you afraid of? We will go away together thousands of miles from here. Let me only see these dollars in here. On this table. Fetch that weight along now. (ANNE *rummages amongst a heap of things in the corner of the hut and comes forward with a seven-pound weight and a long piece of string.* M.W.H. *without looking at her.*) Got it?

ANNE: Yes.

M.W.H.: The right stump, of course. (*Presents it.*) Lash it on properly too. It wouldn't do for it to come off. (ANNE *begins to fasten the weight with the piece of string.*) You see—a resolute man with a lump of iron like this at the end of his arm can crack three skulls long before the idiots with hands have time to pull out their revolvers. See? Especially if it is he who starts the scrimmage all of a sudden. I reckon

there will be precious little sharing of those dollars. We will have the lot. Make a proper knot. Done it?

ANNE: Yes.

M.W.H. (*Swinging his arm*): Good. (*Puts the stump in his pocket and throws the other arm over* ANNE'S *shoulder.*) You are the only one with a backbone. A poor, miserable, helpless, godforsaken cripple like me wants a companion for always . . . and you are the one. (ANNE *wriggles free from his arm and returns to the child.* M.W.H. *listens.*)

FECTOR (*Voice outside*): After you, Captain. We have been out for a breath of air. Isn't it hot though? (DAVIDSON *enters room with a spirit kettle in one hand and some sort of little box containing medicines.*)

M.W.H. (*Who at first sound of voices had thrown himself back into his chair, to* DAVIDSON): Isn't it unfortunate about that poor child?

DAVIDSON (*With meaning*): Yes, and for the woman too.

M.W.H.: A mother's feelings, of course. But I can't stand seeing a child suffer. I can't

bear it. But what could I do, a poor cripple! I couldn't smooth the pillow of a dying friend. How lucky you turned up, just in the nick of time. Did they expect you? I was never so surprised in my life.

DAVIDSON (*Who has stopped to listen*): Not so much as I am. (*Passes into the other room.*)

FECTOR (*Who, with the other two has been standing in the doorway*): The night's as black as the inside of a cow. (*All three approach the table.*)

M.W.H.: Did you make sure how the gangway is laid?

NAKHODA (*Fatuous tone*): Yes. There's a double plank. It will be quite easy for you.

M.W.H.: Shut up, you idiot. (*The other subsides with a complacent smile.*) Come on, sit down, let's pretend to play cards or do some damned thing or other. (*They sit down, take up cards, but look nervous, distracted and jumpy.*)

DAVIDSON (*In the other room to* ANNE): Here are some matches. I brought you a candle too. Light it, Anne. We will boil that kettle. (*Changed tone.*) So they came here to wait for

the ship and rob her. It's the hardest thing to believe in I ever ran against in my life. (*Incredulous.*) They can't mean it.

ANNE : They mean it right enough and that man without hands has got pluck enough for the lot of them. (*She busies herself in lighting the lamp under the kettle and giving some medicine out of a spoon to the child.*) They think you are soft, Davy, ha—ha—ha. (*Laughs.*)

DAVIDSON (*Sitting on a keg by the side of the cot, looking up*) : I don't know about being soft, but I know that if trouble comes I will be alone. I am the only white man on board and you know what those kalashes are. At the sound of the first shot all my crew will bolt ashore. I know them well. However, all this sounds like a fairy tale. A vile sort of fairy tale.

ANNE : Oh, Davy, they've been talking before me. (*A moan from the child.* ANNE *bending over cot.*) All right, Tony, Mama will give you a drink soon, a nice sweet drink. (*To* DAVIDSON.) Poor kid. There's nothing in life for such as he. Not a dog's chance. But I couldn't let him go, Davy, I couldn't let him go. No ! No !

DAVIDSON : Steady, Anne. (*Looking at*

child.) Feel him, he is less hot, he will soon be better.

ANNE (*Seizing suddenly* DAVIDSON'S *arm for emphasis*) : Be careful of that devil without hands, Davy.

DAVIDSON : Well, he may be a devil, but without hands he can't do much, can he ?

ANNE (*Impressive*) : Mind you don't let him come near you, that's all. (*Hesitates.*) Listen. The others don't know, but he has made me tie a seven-pound weight on to his right stump. Do you understand ?

DAVIDSON (*Low whistle of astonishment*) : I see. H'm. All this seems more and more incredible. However . . .

ANNE : Davy, you may expect to see them crawling on board your ship about midnight to steal, to murder perhaps.

DAVIDSON (*Discreetly*) : I had better get on board and get ready for the visitors. If they do come.

ANNE : It's no joking matter, Davy. I will come outside the hut with them when they start and it will be hard luck if I don't find occasion

for a laugh. They are used to that from me. Laugh or cry, what's the odds. You will be able to hear me on board this quiet night. . . . You won't go to sleep—will you ?

DAVIDSON : I will try not to. (*Serious.*) Don't you run any risks for me. (*Pointing to the cot.*) Look, he will be all right. (ANNE *drops on her knees by the cot and gazes at the child while* DAVIDSON *passes into the other room.*)

FECTOR : What about a drink now, Captain ?

DAVIDSON : Thanks, I think I will go on board now and turn in. The child is better. He is sleeping. Don't make more noise than you can help.

FECTOR : Oh, we are a quiet lot ; and if the invalid gets worse one of us will run down to call you so that you may play doctor again, so don't shoot at sight.

NAKHODA (*Fatuous tone*) : He hasn't the name of a shooting man.

DAVIDSON (*Contemptuous*) : I never shoot without making sure there is a good reason for it. (*To* BAMTZ.) The boy will be all right.

BAMTZ (*Nervous laugh*): Poor little chap. Thank you, Captain; thank you, Captain.

(M.W.H. *gets up, keeping his stumps in his pockets and makes a bow which* DAVIDSON *returns with a nod. Exit* DAVIDSON.)

ACT II: SCENE 2

DARKENED scene with, at the back and extending nearly across, the darker shape of BAMTZ'S *hut raised a little above level of the stage, with a very dim light showing the square of the doorway. To right, stern of a small ship with a gangway of two planks to the shore and a pair of mooring ropes to the stump of a tree in the foreground. On board, a hammock swung to a boom, with a mosquito net over it, and a bit of skylight, which is all that is shown of the ship on the stage, the rest being in the wings. A few bushes on the bank in which the wind makes a faint rustle. After the curtain has been up for some time the distant crowing of a cock is heard faintly. Again the bushes rustle. The dimly lit doorway in the distance is darkened four different times and* ANNE'S *characteristic laugh is heard very clear, but very faint. Then in the darkness of the stage four figures, noiseless, come stealing forward towards the plank gangway.*

FECTOR (*Sibilant whisper*): No murder. I have no mind to hang.

M.W.H.: And suppose he resists?

BAMTZ (*With chattering teeth*): He w-w-w-on't.

NAKHODA (*Scared voice*) : He's not a shooting man.

M.W.H. : Get on board, you skunks.

(*The business of getting on board should be conducted with every appearance of stealth.* FECTOR, *as the most agile, runs suddenly up without noise, gets on deck, passes on into wing. Next* NAKHODA *crawls up by starts. As to* BAMTZ, *he hangs back and even resists a push from* M.W.H. *at first.*)

BAMTZ (*Whispers*) : No murder.

M.W.H. : You damned coward. I will do the murdering, if necessary. Get up. Don't drop the crowbar. (BAMTZ *proceeds up the gangway on all fours, and sliding past the hammock follows the others into the wing out of sight. Then* M.W.H. *follows with deliberate noiseless pace, step by step, and once on deck stands by the hammock, on watch. A light appears very dimly in the bit of skylight that is visible on the stage and a cracking sound is heard as if some one had been prising open a door.* M.W.H. *makes one step forward towards hammock. Another crack. Takes another step, mutters wildly*) : Why not make sure ! (*By-play representing ferocious irresistible impulse. Swings stump up with weight*

and brings it down on the hammock where the head should be, also throwing himself with a savage grunt upon it, so that hammock collapses under him and is seen to be empty, M.W.H. *getting a bad fall, jumps up in dismay, yells*) : Treason, treason ! (*Dashes over the gangway on the bank yelling*) : We have been sold. Look out for yourselves. (*Shots are heard in the wing.*) Kill him, kill him ! (*The three others follow in a panic, falling over each other while* DAVIDSON *fires repeatedly, and in a confusion and flashes of shots and screams of pain they leap on shore and vanish completely from sight while* DAVIDSON *stands aft, the only person visible to the audience now.* DAVIDSON *has a revolver in each hand, he throws down the empty one, peers into the darkness from which there are sounds of moans and a shout from* M.W.H.) It's that damned woman that has given us away. Where are you, you damned cowards ! Ha ! (M.W.H. *dimly seen for a moment disappears in direction of hut.*)

DAVIDSON (*Slapping his forehead*) : My God, poor Anne. (*He goes ashore, and stands irresolute in the darkness. Starts at a shriek to the left, and the faintest appearance of the running figure of* ANNE. *Makes irresolute step to right. Shriek behind him. Spins round on his heel.*

Then at the back of stage there must be just enough light to show M.W.H. *cutting off* ANNE *who is trying to run into house. They vanish again. A long shriek, cut dead short.*) Run on board, Anne. (*Silence.* DAVIDSON *makes a step or two when the shadow of* M.W.H. *jumps up from the ground and vanishes and* DAVIDSON *stumbles over the body of* ANNE *lying on her face. All the time he must convey by his action that he is in mortal terror of something jumping on him in the dark. Kneels.*) Anne, Anne. (*Tries to lift her.*)

ANNE (*Weak voice*): He knocked me over. Never mind me. The kid. Get the kid out, Davy. (*Moan.* DAVIDSON *makes a step forward towards the house, spins round at an imaginary sound behind him. For a moment his heart fails him and he makes a motion as if to get back on board, then suddenly pulls himself together and with one hand extended and his head over his shoulder all the time paces stiffly on towards the dim light at back of stage and goes within. Directly he vanishes out of the light the vague form of* M.W.H. *appears running, stops, muttering*: I must finish that job. *Stoops, feels over the ground for* ANNE'S *body, squats over it, lifting the stump with the weight. The dim square of light in hut vanishes and directly afterwards the*

faint voice of child is heard calling: Mama, Mama !)

DAVIDSON: Be quiet, Tony. (*His form carrying the child on his left arm and whispering again*: Be quiet, Tony, *comes into view. As he approaches the hardly seen figure of* M.W.H. *squatting over* ANNE, M.W.H. *jumps up.* DAVIDSON *fires. The child whimpers.*)

M.W.H.: Damn his soul ! He's got me. (*Deep groan, falls.*)

DAVIDSON (*Advances, feeling with his foot for* ANNE, *then, with his left hand pressing the child's head to his shoulder, he kneels down and in a low voice says*): Anne. (*He picks up her hand. The boy in a stifled voice whimpers*: Mama. DAVIDSON *drops* ANNE'S *hand, which falls lifeless, and moves on towards the ship, shouting*): On deck there ! On deck ! Serang !

SERANG'S VOICE: Ya, Tuan.

DAVIDSON: Bring a lantern. Here, take the child. (*Hands child over rail.*) You curs, where have you been hiding ? All of you cleared out, eh ?

SERANG: They frightened. All back on board now, Tuan.

DAVIDSON (*To* SERANG *on board*) : Send four men ashore. There is a dead body there which we are going to take out to sea. (*He moves, carrying the lantern low, followed by four Malays in blue dungaree suits, dark faces. Stands the lantern on the ground by the body and looking down at it apostrophizes the corpse.*) Poor Anne ! You are on my conscience, but your boy shall have his chance.

(*As the kalashes stoop to lift up the body* CURTAIN *falls.*)

ONE DAY MORE

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN HAGBERD : (a retired coasting skipper).

JOSIAH CARVIL : (formerly a shipbuilder—a widower—blind).

HARRY HAGBERD : (son of CAPTAIN HAGBERD, who, as a boy, ran away from home).

A LAMPLIGHTER.

BESSIE CARVIL : (daughter of JOSIAH CARVIL).

PLACE : A small sea-port.

TIME : The present—early autumn, towards dusk.

STAGE Represents : To right—two yellow brick cottages belonging to CAPTAIN HAGBERD, one is inhabited by himself, the other by the CARVILS. A lamp-post in front. The red roofs of the town in the background. A sea-wall to left.

Note.—The division into scenes is made in a purely dramatic sense. It has nothing to do with the scenery. It relates only to the varied grouping of the characters with the consequent changes in the mental and emotional atmosphere of the situation.

Scene I

CURTAIN rises disclosing Carvil *and* Bessie *moving away from sea-wall.* Bessie, *about twenty-five. Black dress ; black straw hat. A lot of mahogany-coloured hair loosely done up. Pale face. Full figure. Very quiet.* Carvil, *blind, unwieldy. Reddish whiskers ; slow, deep voice produced without effort. Immovable, big face.*

Carvil (*Hanging heavily on* Bessie's *arm*) : Careful ! Go slow ! (*Stops ;* Bessie *waits patiently.*) Want your poor blind father to break his neck ? (*Shuffles on.*) In a hurry to get home and start that everlasting yarn with your chum the lunatic ?

Bessie : I am not in a hurry to get home, father.

Carvil : Well, then, go steady with a poor blind man. Blind ! Helpless ! (*Strikes the ground with his stick.*) Never mind ! I've had time to make enough money to have ham and eggs for breakfast every morning—thank God ! And thank God, too, for it, girl. You haven't known a single hardship in all the days of your idle life. Unless

you think that a blind, helpless father——

BESSIE: What is there for me to be in a hurry for?

CARVIL: What did you say?

BESSIE: I said there was nothing for me to hurry home for.

CARVIL: There is tho'. To yarn with a lunatic. Anything to get away from your duty.

BESSIE: Captain Hagberd's talk never hurt you or anybody else.

CARVIL: Go on. Stick up for your only friend.

BESSIE: Is it my fault that I haven't another soul to speak to?

CARVIL (*Snarls*): It's mine, perhaps. Can I help being blind? You fret because you want to be gadding about—with a helpless man left all alone at home. Your own father too.

BESSIE: I haven't been away from you half a day since mother died.

CARVIL (*Viciously*): He's a lunatic, our landlord is. That's what he is. Has been for

years—long before those damned doctors destroyed my sight for me. (*Growls angrily, then sighs.*)

BESSIE: Perhaps Captain Hagberd is not so mad as the town takes him for.

CARVIL (*Grimly*): Don't everybody know how he came here from the North to wait till his missing son turns up—here—of all places in the world. His boy that ran away to sea sixteen years ago and never did give a sign of life since! Don't I remember seeing people dodge round corners out of his way when he came along High Street. Seeing him, I tell you. (*Groan.*) He bothered everybody so with his silly talk of his son being sure to come back home—next year—next spring—next month—— What is it by this time, Hey?

BESSIE: Why talk about it? He bothers no one now.

CARVIL: No. They've grown too fly. You've got only to pass a remark on his sail-cloth coat to make him shut up. All the town knows it. But he's got you to listen to his crazy talk whenever he chooses. Don't I hear you two at it, jabber, jabber, mumble, mumble——

BESSIE: What is there so mad in keeping up hope?

CARVIL (*Scathing scorn*): Not mad! Starving himself to lay money by—for that son. Filling his house with furniture he won't let anyone see—for that son. Advertising in the papers every week, these sixteen years—for that son. Not mad! Boy, he calls him. Boy Harry. His boy Harry. His lost boy Harry. Yah! Let him lose his sight to know what real trouble means. And the boy—the man, I should say—must 've been put away safe in Davy Jones's locker for many a year—drowned—food for fishes—dead. . . . Stands to reason, or he would have been here before, smelling around the old fool's money. (*Shakes* BESSIE's *arm slightly.*) Hey?

BESSIE: I don't know. Maybe.

CARVIL (*Bursting out*): Damme if I don't think he ever had a son.

BESSIE: Poor man. Perhaps he never had.

CARVIL: Ain't that mad enough for you? But I suppose you think it sensible.

BESSIE: What does it matter? His talk keeps him up.

CARVIL : Aye ! And it pleases you. Anything to get away from your poor blind father . . . jabber, jabber—mumble, mumble—till I begin to think you must be as crazy as he is. What do you find to talk about, you two ? What's your game ?

(*During the scene* CARVIL *and* BESSIE *have crossed stage from* L. *to* R. *slowly with stoppages.*)

BESSIE : It's warm. Will you sit out for a while ?

CARVIL (*Viciously*) : Yes, I will sit out. (*Insistent.*) But what can be your game ? What are you up to ? (*They pass through garden gate.*) Because if it's his money you are after——

BESSIE : Father ! How can you !

CARVIL (*Disregarding her*) : To make you independent of your poor blind father, then you are a fool. (*Drops heavily on seat.*) He's too much of a miser to ever make a will—even if he weren't mad.

BESSIE : Oh ! It never entered my head. I swear it never did.

CARVIL : Never did. Hey ! Then you are

a still bigger fool. . . . I want to go to sleep ! (*Takes off his hat, drops it on ground, and leans his head back against the wall.*)

BESSIE : And I have been a good daughter to you. Won't you say that for me ?

CARVIL (*Very distinctly*) : I want—to—go—to—sleep. I'm tired. (*Closes his eyes.*)

(*During the scene* CAPTAIN HAGBERD *has been seen hesitating at the back of stage then running quickly to the door of his cottage. He puts inside a tin kettle—from under his coat—and comes down to the railing between the two gardens stealthily.*)

Scene 2

Carvil *seated.* Bessie. Captain Hagberd (*white beard, sail-cloth jacket*).

Bessie (*Knitting*): You've been out this afternoon for quite a long time, haven't you?

Capt. Hagberd (*Eager*): Yes, my dear. (*Slyly.*) Of course you saw me come back.

Bessie: Oh, yes. I did see you. You had something under your coat.

Capt. H. (*Anxiously*): It was only a kettle, my dear. A tin water-kettle. I am glad I thought of it just in time. (*Winks, nods.*) When a husband gets back from his work he needs a lot of water for a wash. See? (*Dignified.*) Not that Harry'll ever need to do a hand's turn after he comes home . . . (*Falters —casts stealthy glances on all sides*) . . . tomorrow.

Bessie (*Looks up, grave*): Captain Hagberd, have you ever thought that perhaps your son will not . . .

Capt. H. (*Paternally*): I've thought of everything, my dear—of everything a reasonable young couple may need for housekeeping.

Why, I can hardly turn about in my room up there the house is that full. (*Rubs his hands with satisfaction.*) For my son, Harry—when he comes home. One day more.

BESSIE (*Flattering*) : Oh, you are a great one for bargains. (CAPT. H. *delighted.*) But, Captain Hagberd—if—if—you don't know what may happen—if all that home you've got together were to be wasted—for nothing—after all. (*Aside.*) Oh, I can't bring it out.

CAPT. H. (*Agitated ; flings arms up, stamps feet ; stuttering*) : What ? What d'ye mean ? What's going to happen to the things ?

BESSIE (*Soothing*) : Nothing ! Nothing ! Dust—or moth—you know. Damp, perhaps. You never let anyone into the house . . .

CAPT. H. : Dust ! Damp ! (*Has a throaty, gurgling laugh.*) I light the fires and dust the things myself. (*Indignant.*) Let anyone into the house, indeed ! What would Harry say ! (*Walks up and down his garden hastily with tosses, flings, and jerks of his whole body.*)

BESSIE (*With authority*) : Now, then, Captain Hagberd ! You know I won't put up with your tantrums. (*Shakes finger at him.*)

CAPT. H. (*Subdued, but still sulky, with his back to her*): You want to see the things. That's what you're after. Well, no, not even you. Not till Harry has had his first look.

BESSIE: Oh, no! I don't. (*Relenting.*) Not till you're willing. (*Smiles at* CAPT. H., *who has turned half round already.*) You mustn't excite yourself. (*Knits.*)

CAPT. H. (*Condescending*): And you the only sensible girl for miles and miles around. Can't you trust me? I am a domestic man. Always was, my dear. I hated the sea. People don't know what they let their boys into when they send them to sea. As soon make convicts of them at once. What sort of life is it? Most of your time you don't know what's going on at home. (*Insinuating.*) There's nothing anywhere on earth as good as a home, my dear. (*Pause.*) With a good husband . . .

CARVIL (*Heard from his seat fragmentarily*): There they go . . . jabber, jabber . . . mumble, mumble. (*With a groaning effort.*) Helpless! (BESSIE *has glanced round at him.*)

CAPT. H. (*Mutters*): Extravagant ham and eggs fellow. (*Louder.*) Of course it isn't as if he had a son to make a home ready for. Girls

are different, my dear. They don't run away, my dear, my dear. (*Agitated.*)

BESSIE (*Drops her arms wearily*): No, Captain Hagberd—they don't.

CAPT. H. (*Slowly*): I wouldn't let my own flesh and blood go to sea. Not I.

BESSIE: And the boy ran away.

CAPT. H. (*A little vacantly*): Yes, my only son Harry. (*Rouses himself.*) Coming home, to-morrow.

BESSIE (*Looks at him pityingly; speaks softly*): Sometimes, Captain Hagberd, a hope turns out false.

CAPT. H. (*Uneasy*): What's that got to do with Harry's coming back?

BESSIE: It's good to hope for something. But suppose now—— (*Feeling her way.*) Yours is not the only lost son that's never . . .

CAPT. H.: Never what! You don't believe he's drowned. (*Crouches, glaring and grasping the rails.*)

BESSIE (*Frightened, drops knitting*): Captain Hagberd—don't. (*Catches hold of his shoulders*

over the railings.) Don't—my God! He's going out of his mind! (*Cries.*) I didn't mean it! I don't know.

CAPT. H. (*Has backed away. An affected burst of laughter*): What nonsense! None of us Hagberds belonged to the sea. All farmers for hundreds of years. (*Paternal and cunning.*) Don't alarm yourself, my dear. The sea can't get us. Look at me! I didn't get drowned. Moreover, Harry ain't a sailor at all. And if he isn't a sailor, he's bound to come back—to-morrow.

BESSIE (*Has been facing him; murmurs*): No. I give it up. He scares me. (*Aloud, sharply.*) Then I would give up that advertising in the papers.

CAPT. H. (*Surprised and puzzled*): Why, my dear? Everybody does it. His poor mother and I have been advertising for years and years. But she was an impatient woman. She died.

BESSIE: If your son's coming, as—as you say—what's the good of that expense? You had better spend that half-crown on yourself. I believe you don't eat enough.

CAPT. H. (*Confused*): But it's the right thing

to do. Look at the Sunday papers. Missing relatives on top page—all proper. (*Looks unhappy.*)

BESSIE (*Tartly*): Ah, well! I declare I don't know what you live on.

CAPT. H.: Are you getting impatient, my dear? Don't get impatient—like my poor wife. If she'd only been patient she'd be here. Waiting—only one day more. (*Pleadingly.*) Don't be impatient, my dear.

BESSIE: I've no patience with you sometimes.

CAPT. H. (*Flash of lucidity*): Why? What's the matter? (*Sympathetic.*) You're tired out, my dear, that's what it is.

BESSIE: Yes, I am. Day after day. (*Stands listless, arms hanging down.*)

CAPT. H. (*Timidly*): House dull?

BESSIE (*Apathetic*): Yes.

CAPT. H. (*As before*): H'm. Wash, cook, scrub. Hey?

BESSIE (*As before*): Yes.

CAPT. H. (*Pointing stealthily at the sleeping* CARVIL) : Heavy ?

BESSIE (*In a dead voice*) : Like a millstone.

(*A silence.*)

CAPT. H. (*Burst of indignation*) : Why don't that extravagant fellow get you a servant ?

BESSIE : I don't know.

CAPT. H. (*Cheerily*) : Wait till Harry comes home. He'll get you one.

BESSIE (*Almost hysterical ; laughs*) : Why, Captain Hagberd, perhaps your son won't even want to look at me—when he comes home.

CAPT. H. (*In a great voice*) : What ! (*Quite low.*) The boy wouldn't dare. (*Rising choler.*) Wouldn't dare to refuse the only sensible girl for miles around. That stubborn jackanapes refuse to marry a girl like you ! (*Walks about in a fury.*) You trust me, my dear, my dear, my dear. I'll make him. I'll—I'll—— (*Splutters.*) Cut him off with a shilling.

BESSIE : Hush ! (*Severe.*) You mustn't talk like that. What's this ? More of your tantrums ?

CAPT. H. (*Quite humble*): No, no—this isn't my tantrums—when I don't feel quite well in my head. Only I can't stand this. . . . I've grown as fond of you as if you'd been the wife of my Harry already. And to be told—— (*Can't restrain himself; shouts.*) Jackanapes!

BESSIE: Sh——! Don't you worry! (*Wearily.*) I must give that up too, I suppose. (*Aloud.*) I didn't mean it, Captain Hagberd.

CAPT. H.: It's as if I were to have two children to-morrow. My son Harry—and the only sensible girl—— Why, my dear, I couldn't get on without you. We two are reasonable together. The rest of the people in this town are crazy. The way they stare at you. And the grins—they're all on the grin. It makes me dislike to go out. (*Bewildered.*) It seems as if there was something wrong about—somewhere. My dear, is there anything wrong—you who are sensible . . .

BESSIE (*Soothingly tender*): No, no, Captain Hagberd. There is nothing wrong about you anywhere.

CARVIL (*Lying back*): Bessie! (*Sits up.*) Get my hat, Bessie. . . . Bessie, my hat. . . . Bessie . . . Bessie . . . (*At the first sound*

BESSIE *picks up and puts away her knitting. She walks towards him, picks up hat, puts it on his head.*) Bessie, my . . . (*Hat on head; shouting stops.*)

BESSIE (*Quietly*): Will you go in, now?

CARVIL: Help me up. Steady. I'm dizzy. It's the thundery weather. An autumn thunderstorm means a bad gale. Very fierce —and sudden. There will be shipwrecks to-night on our coast.

(*Exit* BESSIE *and* CARVIL *through door of their cottage. It has fallen dusk.*)

CAPT. H. (*Picks up spade*): Extravagant fellow! And all this town is mad—perfectly mad. I found them out years ago. Thank God they don't come this way staring and grinning. I can't bear them. I'll never go again into that High Street. (*Agitated.*) Never, never, never. Won't need to after to-morrow. Never! (*Flings down spade in a passion.*)

(*While* HAGBERD *speaks, the bow window of the* CARVILS *is lit up, and* BESSIE *is seen settling her father in a big armchair. Pulls down blind. Enter* LAMPLIGHTER. CAPT. H. *picks up the*

spade and leans forward on it with both hands ; very still, watching him light the lamp.)

LAMPLIGHTER (*Jocular*) : There ! You will be able to dig by lamplight if the fancy takes you.

(*Exit* LAMPLIGHTER *to back.*)

CAPT. H. (*Disgusted*) : Ough ! The people here . . . (*Shudders.*)

LAMPLIGHTER'S VOICE (*Heard loudly beyond the cottages*) : Yes, that's the way.

(*Enter* HARRY *from back.*)

Scene 3

Captain Hagberd. Harry. *Later* Bessie.

Harry Hagberd (*Thirty-one, tall, broad shoulders, shaven face, small moustache. Blue serge suit. Coat open. Grey flannel shirt without collar and tie. No waistcoat. Belt with buckle. Black, soft felt hat, wide-brimmed, worn crushed in the crown and a little on one side. Good nature, recklessness, some swagger in the bearing. Assured, deliberate walk with a heavy tread. Slight roll in the gait. Walks down. Stops, hands in pockets. Looks about. Speaks*): This must be it. Can't see anything beyond. There's somebody. (*Walks up to* Capt. H.'s *gate.*) Can you tell me . . . (*Manner changes.*) (*Leans elbow on gate.*) Why, you must be Captain Hagberd himself.

Capt. H. (*In garden, both hands on spade peering, startled*): Yes, I am.

Harry (*Slowly*): You've been advertising in the papers for your son, I believe.

Capt. H. (*Off his guard, nervous*): Yes. My only boy Harry. He's coming home tomorrow. (*Mumbles.*) For a permanent stay.

HARRY (*Surprised*): The devil he is! (*Change of tone.*) My word! You've grown a beard like Father Christmas himself.

CAPT. H. (*Impressively*): Go your way. (*Waves one hand loftily.*) What's that to you. Go your way. (*Agitated.*) Go your way.

HARRY: There, there. I am not trespassing in the street—where I stand—am I? Tell you what, I fancy there's something wrong about your nerves. Suppose you let me come in—for a quiet chat, you know.

CAPT. H. (*Horrified*): Let you—*you* come in!

HARRY (*Persuasive*): Because I could give you some real information about your son. The—very—latest—tip. If you care to hear.

CAPT. H. (*Explodes*): No! I don't care to hear. (*Begins to pace to and fro, spade on shoulder. Gesticulating with his other arm.*) Here's a fellow—a grinning town fellow, who says there's something wrong. (*Fiercely.*) I have got more information than you're aware of. I have all the information I want. I have had it for years—for years—for years—enough to last me till to-morrow! Let you

come in, indeed! What would Harry say?

(BESSIE CARVIL *enters at cottage door with a white wrap on her head and stands in her garden trying to see.*)

BESSIE: What's the matter?

CAPT. H. (*Beside himself*): An information fellow. (*Stumbles.*)

HARRY (*Putting out arm to steady him, gravely*): Here! Steady a bit! Seems to me somebody's been trying to get at you. (*Change of tone.*) Hullo! What's this rig you've got on? . . . Storm canvas coat, by George! (*He gives a big, throaty laugh.*) Well! You *are* a character!

CAPT. H. (*Daunted by the allusion, looks at coat*): I—I wear it for—for the time being. Till—till—to-morrow. (*Shrinks away, spade in hand, to door of his cottage.*)

BESSIE (*Advancing*): And what may you want, sir?

HARRY (*Turns to* BESSIE *at once; easy manner*): I'd like to know about this swindle that's going to be sprung on him. I didn't mean to startle the old man. You see, on my way here

I dropped into a barber's to get a twopenny shave, and they told me there that he was something of a character. He has been a character all his life.

BESSIE (*Very low, wondering*) : What swindle ?

CAPT. H. : A grinning fellow ! (*Makes sudden dash indoors with the spade. Door slams. Lock clicks. Affected gurgling laugh within.*)

Scene 4

Bessie *and* Harry. *Later* Capt. Hagberd *from window.*

Harry (*After a short silence*): What on earth's upset him so? What's the meaning of all this fuss? He isn't always like that, is he?

Bessie: I don't know who you are; but I may tell you that his mind has been troubled for years about an only son who ran away from home—a long time ago. Everybody knows that here.

Harry (*Thoughtful*): Troubled—for years! (*Suddenly.*) Well, I am the son.

Bessie (*Steps back*): You! . . . Harry!

Harry (*Amused, dry tone*): Got hold of my name, eh? Been making friends with the old man?

Bessie (*Distressed*): Yes . . . I . . . sometimes . . . (*Rapidly.*) He's our landlord.

Harry (*Scornfully*): Owns both them rabbit hutches, does he? Just a thing he'd be proud of. . . . (*Earnest.*) And now you had better tell me all about that chap who's coming to-

morrow. Know anything of him? I reckon there's more than one in that little game. Come! Out with it! (*Chaffing.*) I don't take no . . . from women.

BESSIE (*Bewildered*): Oh! It's so difficult. . . . What had I better do?

HARRY (*Good-humoured*): Make a clean breast of it.

BESSIE (*Wildly to herself*): Impossible! (*Starts.*) You don't understand. I must think—see—try to—I, I must have time. Plenty of time.

HARRY: What for? Come. Two words. And don't be afraid for yourself. I ain't going to make it a police job. But it's the other fellow that'll get upset when he least expects it. There'll be some fun when he shows his mug here to-morrow. (*Snaps fingers.*) I don't care that for the old man's dollars, but right is right. You shall see me put a head on that coon, whoever he is.

BESSIE (*Wrings hands slightly*): What had I better do? (*Suddenly to* HARRY.) It's you—you yourself that we—that he's waiting for. It's *you* who are to come to-morrow.

HARRY (*Slowly*): Oh! it's me! (*Perplexed.*) There's something there I can't understand. I haven't written ahead or anything. It was my chum who showed me the advertisement with the old boy's address, this very morning—in London.

BESSIE (*Anxious*): How can I make it plain to you without . . . (*Bites her lip, embarrassed.*) Sometimes he talks so strangely.

HARRY (*Expectant*): Does he? What about?

BESSIE: Only you. And he will stand no contradicting.

HARRY: Stubborn. Eh? The old man hasn't changed much from what I can remember. (*They stand looking at each other helplessly.*)

BESSIE: He's made up his mind you would come back . . . to-morrow.

HARRY: I can't hang about here till morning. Got no money to get a bed. Not a cent. But why won't to-day do?

BESSIE: Because you've been too long away.

HARRY (*With force*): Look here, they fairly

drove me out. Poor mother nagged at me for being idle, and the old man said he would cut my soul out of my body rather than let me go to sea.

BESSIE (*Murmurs*) : He can bear no contradicting.

HARRY (*Continuing*) : Well, it looked as tho' he would do it too. So I went. (*Moody.*) It seems to me sometimes I was born to them by a mistake . . . in that other rabbit hutch of a house.

BESSIE (*A little mocking*) : And where do you think you ought to have been born by rights ?

HARRY : In the open—upon a beach—on a windy night.

BESSIE : (*Faintly*) : Ah !

HARRY : They were characters, both of them, by George ! Shall I try the door ?

BESSIE : Wait. I must explain to you why it is to-morrow.

HARRY : Aye. That you must, or . . .

(*Window in* H.'s *cottage runs up.*)

CAPT. H.'S VOICE (*Above*): A—grinning—information—fellow coming to worry me in my own garden! What next?

(*Window rumbles down.*)

BESSIE: Yes. I must. (*Lays hand on* HARRY'S *sleeve.*) Let's get further off. Nobody ever comes this way after dark.

HARRY (*Careless laugh*): Aye. A good road for a walk with a girl.

(*They turn their backs on audience and move up the stage slowly. Close together.* HARRY *bends his head over* BESSIE.)

BESSIE'S VOICE (*Beginning eagerly*): People here somehow did not take kindly to him.

HARRY'S VOICE: Aye. Aye. I understand that.

(*They walk slowly back towards the front.*)

BESSIE: He was almost ready to starve himself for your sake.

HARRY: And I had to starve more than once for his whim.

BESSIE: I'm afraid you've a hard heart. (*Remains thoughtful.*)

HARRY: What for? For running away? (*Indignant.*) Why, he wanted to make a blamed lawyer's clerk of me.

(*From here this scene goes on mainly near and about the street lamp.*)

BESSIE (*Rousing herself*): What are you? A sailor?

HARRY: Anything you like. (*Proudly.*) Sailor enough to be worth my salt on board any craft that swims the seas.

BESSIE: He will never, never believe it. He mustn't be contradicted.

HARRY: Always liked to have his own way. And you've been encouraging him.

BESSIE (*Earnestly*): No!—not in everything—not really!

HARRY (*Vexed laugh*): What about that pretty to-morrow notion? I've a hungry chum in London—waiting for me.

BESSIE (*Defending herself*): Why should I

make the poor old friendless man miserable? I thought you were far away. I thought you were dead. I didn't know but you had never been born. I . . . I . . . (HARRY *turns to her. She desperately.*) It was easier to believe it myself. (*Carried away.*) And after all it's true. It's come to pass. This is the to-morrow we've been waiting for.

HARRY (*Half perfunctorily*): Aye. Anybody can see that your heart is as soft as your voice.

BESSIE (*As if unable to keep back the words*): I didn't think you would have noticed my voice.

HARRY (*Already inattentive*): H'm! Dashed scrape. This is a queer to-morrow, without any sort of to-day, as far as I can see. (*Resolutely.*) I must try the door.

BESSIE: Well—try, then.

HARRY (*From gate looking over shoulder at* BESSIE): He ain't likely to fly out at me, is he? I would be afraid of laying my hands on him. The chaps are always telling me I don't know my own strength.

BESSIE (*In front*): He's the most harmless creature that ever . . .

HARRY : You wouldn't say so if you had seen him walloping me with a hard leather strap. (*Walking up garden.*) I haven't forgotten it in sixteen long years. (*Rat-tat-tat twice.*) Hallo, Dad. (BESSIE *intensely expectant. Rat-tat-tat.*) Hullo, Dad—let me in. I am your own Harry. Straight. Your son Harry come back home—a day too soon.

(*Window above rumbles up.*)

CAPT. H. (*Seen leaning out, aiming with spade*) : Aha !

BESSIE (*Warningly*) : Look out, Harry ! (*Spade falls.*) Are you hurt ? (*Window rumbles down.*)

HARRY (*In the distance*) : Only grazed my hat.

BESSIE : Thank God ! (*Intensely.*) What'll he do now ?

HARRY (*Comes forward, slamming gate behind him*) : Just like old times. Nearly licked the life out of me for wanting to go away, and now I come back he shies a confounded old shovel at my head. (*Fumes. Laughs a little.*) I wouldn't care, only poor little Ginger—Ginger's my chum up in London—he will starve while

I walk back all the way from here. (*Faces* BESSIE *blankly.*) I spent my last twopence on a shave . . . out of respect for the old man.

BESSIE : I think, if you let me, I could manage to talk him round in a week, maybe.

(*A muffled periodical bellowing has been heard faintly for some time.*)

HARRY (*On the alert*) : What's this ? Who's making this row ? Hark ! Bessie, Bessie. It's in your house, I believe.

BESSIE (*Without stirring, drearily*) : It's for me.

HARRY (*Discreetly, whispering*) : Good voice for a ship's deck in a squall. Your husband ? (*Steps out of lamplight.*)

BESSIE : No. My father. He's blind. (*Pause.*) I'm not married.

(*Bellowings grow louder.*)

HARRY : Oh, I say. What's up ? Who's murdering him ?

BESSIE (*Calmly*) : I expect he's finished his tea. (*Bellowing continues regularly.*)

HARRY : Hadn't you better see to it ? You'll have the whole town coming out here presently. (BESSIE *moves off.*) I say ! (BESSIE *stops.*) Couldn't you scare up some bread and butter for me from that tea ? I'm hungry. Had no breakfast.

BESSIE (*Starts off at the word "hungry," dropping to the ground the white woollen shawl*) : I won't be a minute. Don't go away.

HARRY (*Alone ; picks up shawl absently, and, looking at it spread out in his hands, pronounces slowly*) : A—dam'—silly—scrape. (*Pause. Throws shawl on arm. Strolls up and down. Mutters.*) No money to get back. (*Louder.*) Silly little Ginger'll think I've got hold of the pieces and given an old shipmate the go by. One good shove—(*Makes motion of bursting in door with his shoulders*)—would burst that door in—I bet. (*Looks about.*) I wonder where the nearest bobby is ! No. They would want to bundle me neck and crop into chokey. (*Shudders.*) Perhaps. It makes me dog-sick to think of being locked up. Haven't got the nerve. Not for prison. (*Leans against lamp-post.*) And not a cent for my fare. I wonder if that girl now . . .

BESSIE (*Coming hastily forward, plate with bread and meat in hand*) : I didn't take time to get anything else. . . .

HARRY (*Begins to eat*) : You're not standing treat to a beggar. My dad is a rich man—you know.

BESSIE (*Plate in hand*) : You resemble your father.

HARRY : I was the very image of him in face from a boy—(*Eats*)—and that's about as far as it goes. He was always one of your domestic characters. He looked sick when he had to go to sea for a fortnight's trip. (*Laughs.*) He was all for house and home.

BESSIE : And you ? Have you never wished for a home ? (*Goes off with empty plate and puts it down hastily on* CARVIL'S *bench—out of sight.*)

HARRY (*Left in front*) : Home ! If I found myself shut up in what the old man calls a home, I would kick it down about my ears on the third day—or else go to bed and die before the week was out. Die in a house—ough !

BESSIE (*Returning ; stops and speaks from*

garden railing) : And where is it that you wish to die ?

HARRY : In the bush, in the sea, on some blamed mountain-top for choice. No such luck, tho', I suppose.

BESSIE (*From distance*) : Would that be luck ?

HARRY : Yes ! For them that make the whole world their home.

BESSIE (*Comes forward shyly*) : The world's a cold home—they say.

HARRY (*A little gloomy*) : So it is. When a man's done for.

BESSIE : You see ! (*Taunting.*) And a ship's not so very big after all.

HARRY : No. But the sea is great. And then what of the ship ! You love her and leave her, Miss—Bessie's your name—isn't it ? . . . I like that name.

BESSIE : You like my name ! I wonder you remembered it. . . . That's why, I suppose.

HARRY (*Slight swagger in voice*) : What's the odds ! As long as a fellow has lived. And a voyage isn't a marriage—as we sailors say.

BESSIE : So you're not married—(*Movement of* HARRY)—to any ship.

HARRY (*Soft laugh*) : Ship ! I've loved and left more of them than I can remember. I've been nearly everything you can think of but a tinker or a soldier ; I've been a boundary rider ; I've sheared sheep and humped my swag and harpooned a whale ; I've rigged ships and skinned dead bullocks and prospected for gold —and turned my back on more money than the old man would have scraped together in his whole life.

BESSIE (*Thoughtfully*) : I could talk him over in a week. . . .

HARRY (*Negligently*) : I dare say you could. (*Joking.*) I don't know but what I could make shift to wait if you only promise to talk to me now and then. I've grown quite fond of your voice. I like a right woman's voice.

BESSIE (*Averted head*) : Quite fond. (*Sharply.*) Talk ! Nonsense ! Much you'd care. (*Business-like.*) Of course I would have to sometimes. . . . (*Thoughtful again.*) Yes. In a week—if—if only I knew you would try to get on with him afterwards.

HARRY (*Leaning against lamp-post ; growls through his teeth*) : More humouring. Ah ! well, no ! (*Hums significantly.*)

> Oh, oh, oh, Rio, . . .
> And fare thee well
> My bonnie young girl,
> We're bound for Rio Grande.

BESSIE (*Shivering*) : What's this ?

HARRY : Why ! The chorus of an up-anchor tune. Kiss and go. A deep-water ship's good-bye. . . . You are cold. Here's that thing of yours I've picked up and forgot there on my arm. Turn round a bit. So. (*Wraps her up—commanding.*) Hold the ends together in front.

BESSIE (*Softly*) : A week is not so very long.

HARRY (*Begins violently*) : You think that I—— (*Stops with sidelong look at her.*) I can't dodge about in ditches and live on air and water. Can I ? I haven't any money—you know.

BESSIE : He's been scraping and saving up for years. All he has is for you, and perhaps . . .

HARRY (*Interrupts*): Yes. If I come to sit on it like a blamed toad in a hole. Thank you.

BESSIE (*Angrily*): What did you come for, then?

HARRY (*Promptly*): For five quid—(*Pause*)—after a jolly good spree.

BESSIE (*Scathingly*): You and that—that—chum of yours have been drinking.

HARRY (*Laughs*): Don't fly out, Miss Bessie—dear. Ginger's not a bad little chap. Can't take care of himself, tho'. Blind three days. (*Serious.*) Don't think I am given that way. Nothing and nobody can get over me unless I like. I can be as steady as a rock.

BESSIE (*Murmurs*): Oh! I don't think you are bad.

HARRY (*Approvingly*): You're right there. (*Impulsive.*) Ask the girls all over—— (*Checks himself.*) Ginger, he's long-headed, too, in his way—mind you. He sees the paper this morning, and says he to me, "Hallo! Look at that, Harry—loving parent—that's five quid, sure." So we scraped all our pockets for the fare. . . .

BESSIE (*Unbelieving*) : You came here for that.

HARRY (*Surprised*) : What else would I want here ? Five quid isn't much to ask for—once in sixteen years. (*Through his teeth with a sidelong look at* B.) And now I am ready to go —for my fare.

BESSIE (*Clasping her hands*) : Whoever heard a man talk like this before ! I can't believe you mean it ?

HARRY : What ? That I would go ? You just try and see.

BESSIE (*Disregarding him*) : Don't you care for anyone ? Didn't you ever want anyone in the world to care for you ?

HARRY : In the world ! (*Boastful.*) There's hardly a place you can go in the world where you wouldn't find somebody that did care for Harry Hagberd. (*Pause.*) I'm not of the sort that go about skulking under false names.

BESSIE : Somebody—that means a woman.

HARRY : Well ! And if it did ?

BESSIE (*Unsteadily*) : Oh, I see how it is.

You get round them with your soft speeches, your promises, and then . . .

HARRY (*Violently*): *Never!*

BESSIE (*Startled, steps back*): Ah—you never . . .

HARRY (*Calm*): Never yet told a lie to a woman.

BESSIE: What lie?

HARRY: Why, the lie that comes glib to a man's tongue. None of that for me. I leave the sneaking off to them soft-spoken chaps you're thinking of. No! If you love me you take me. And if you take me—why, then, the Capstan-Song of deep-water ships is sure to settle it all some fine day.

BESSIE (*After a short pause, with effort*): It's like your ships, then.

HARRY (*Amused*): Exactly, up to now. Or else I wouldn't be here in a silly fix.

BESSIE (*Assumed indifference*): Perhaps it's because you've never yet met—— (*Voice fails.*)

HARRY (*Negligently*): Maybe. And perhaps

never shall. . . . What's the odds ? It's the looking for a thing. . . . No matter, I love them all—ships and women. The scrapes they got me into, and the scrapes they got me out of—my word ! I say, Miss Bessie, what are you thinking of ?

BESSIE (*Lifts her head*) : That you are supposed never to tell a lie.

HARRY : Never, eh ? You wouldn't be that hard on a chap.

BESSIE (*Recklessly*) : Never to a woman, I mean.

HARRY : Well, no. (*Serious.*) Never anything that matters. (*Aside.*) I don't seem to get any nearer to my railway fare. (*Leans wearily against the lamp-post with a far-off look.* BESSIE *to* L. *looks at him.*)

BESSIE : Now what are *you* thinking of ?

HARRY (*Turns his head ; stares at* B.) : Well, I was thinking what a fine figure of a girl you are.

BESSIE (*Looks away a moment*) : Is that true, or is it only one of them that don't matter ?

HARRY (*Laughing a little*) : No ! no ! That's

true. Haven't you ever been told that before ? The men . . .

BESSIE : I hardly speak to a soul from year's end to year's end. Father's blind. He don't like strangers, and he can't bear to think of me out of his call. Nobody comes near us much.

HARRY (*Absent-minded*) : Blind—ah ! of course.

BESSIE : For years and years . . .

HARRY (*Commiserating*) : For years and years. In one of them hutches. You are a good daughter. (*Brightening up.*) A fine girl altogether. You seem the sort that makes a good chum to a man in a fix. And there's not a man in this whole town who found you out ? I can hardly credit it, Miss Bessie. (B. *shakes her head.*) Man I said ! (*Contemptuous.*) A lot of tame rabbits in hutches I call them. . . . (*Breaks off.*) I say, when's the last train up to London ? Can you tell me ?

BESSIE (*Gazes at him steadily*) : What for ? You've no money.

HARRY : That's just it. (*Leans back against post again.*) Hard luck. (*Insinuating.*) But

there was never a time in all my travels that a woman of the right sort did not turn up to help me out of a fix. I don't know why. It's perhaps because they know without telling that I love them all. (*Playful.*) I've almost fallen in love with you, Miss Bessie.

BESSIE (*Unsteady laugh*): Why! How you talk! You haven't even seen my face properly. (*One step towards* HARRY, *as if compelled.*)

HARRY (*Bending forward gallantly*): A little pale. It suits some. (*Puts out his hand, catches hold of* B.'s *arm, draws her to him.*) Let's see. . . . Yes, it suits *you.* (*It's a moment before* B. *puts up her hands, palms out, and turns away her head.*)

BESSIE (*Whispering*): Don't. (*Struggles a little. Released, stands averted.*)

HARRY: No offence. (*Stands, back to audience, looking at* CAPT. H.'s *cottage.*)

BESSIE (*Alone in front; faces audience; whispers*): My voice—my figure—my heart—my face. . . .

(*A silence.* B.'s *face gradually lights up.*

Directly HARRY *speaks, expression of hopeful attention.*)

HARRY (*From railings*) : The old man seems to have gone to sleep waiting for that to-morrow of his.

BESSIE : Come away. He sleeps very little.

HARRY (*Strolls down*) : He has taken an everlasted jamming hitch round the whole business. (*Vexed.*) Cast it loose who may. (*Contemptuous exclamation.*) To-morrow. Pooh ! It'll be just another mad to-day.

BESSIE : It's the brooding over his hope that's done it. People teased him so. It's his fondness for you that's troubled his mind.

HARRY : Aye. A confounded shovel on the head. The old man had always a queer way of showing his fondness for me.

BESSIE : A hopeful, troubled, expecting old man—left alone—all alone.

HARRY (*Lower tone*) : Did he ever tell you what mother died of ?

BESSIE : Yes. (*A little bitter.*) From impatience.

HARRY (*Makes a gesture with his arms ; speaks vaguely but with feeling*) : I believe you have been very good to my old man. . . .

BESSIE (*Tentative*) : Wouldn't you try to be a son to him ?

HARRY (*Angrily*) : No contradicting ; is that it ? You seem to know my dad pretty well. And so do I. He's dead nuts on having his own way—and I've been used to have my own too long. It's the deuce of a fix.

BESSIE : How could it hurt you not to contradict him for a while—and perhaps in time you would get used . . .

HARRY (*Interrupts sulkily*) : I ain't accustomed to knuckle under. There's a pair of us. Hagberds both. I ought to be thinking of my train.

BESSIE (*Earnestly*) : Why ? There's no need. Let us get away up the road a little.

HARRY (*Through his teeth*) : And no money for the fare. (*Looks up.*) Sky's come overcast. Black, too. It'll be a wild, windy night . . . to walk the high-road on. But I and wild nights are old friends wherever the free wind blows.

BESSIE (*Entreating*) : No need. No need. (*Looks apprehensively at* HAGBERD'S *cottage. Takes a couple of steps up as if to draw* HARRY *further off.* HARRY *follows. Both stop.*)

HARRY (*After waiting*) : What about this to-morrow whim ?

BESSIE : Leave that to me. Of course all his fancies are not mad. They aren't. (*Pause.*) Most people in this town would think what he had set his mind on quite sensible. If he ever talks to you of it, don't contradict him. It would—it would be dangerous.

HARRY (*Surprised*) : What would he do ?

BESSIE : He would—I don't know—something rash.

HARRY (*Startled*) : To himself ?

BESSIE : No. It'd be against you—I fear.

HARRY (*Sullen*) : Let him.

BESSIE : Never. Don't quarrel. But perhaps he won't even try to talk to you of it. (*Thinking aloud.*) Who knows what I can do with him in a week ! I can, I can, I can—I must.

HARRY : Come—what's this sensible notion of his that I mustn't quarrel about ?

BESSIE (*Turns to* HARRY, *calm, forcible*) : If I make him once see that you've come back, he will be as sane as you or I. All his mad notions will be gone. But that other is quite sensible. And you mustn't quarrel over it.

(*Moves up to back of stage.* HARRY *follows a little behind, away from audience.*)

HARRY'S VOICE (*Calm*) : Let's hear what it is.

(*Voices cease. Action visible as before,* HARRY *steps back and walks hastily down.* BESSIE *at his elbow, follows with her hands clasped.*)

(*Loud burst of voice.*)

HARRY (*Raving to and fro*) : No ! Expects me —a home. Who wants his home ? . . . What I want is hard work, or an all-fired racket, or more room than there is in the whole of England. Expects me ! A man like me—for his rotten money—there ain't enough money in the world to turn me into a blamed tame rabbit in a hutch. (*He stops suddenly before* BESSIE, *arms crossed on breast. Violently.*) Don't you see it ?

BESSIE (*Terrified, stammering faintly*): Yes. Yes. Don't look at me like this. (*Sudden scream.*) Don't quarrel with him. He's mad!

HARRY (*Headlong utterance*): Mad! Not he. He likes his own way. Tie me up by the neck here. Here! Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Louder.*) And the whole world is not a bit too big for me to spread my elbows in, I can tell you—what's your name—Bessie. (*Rising scorn.*) Marry! Wants me to marry and settle. . . . (*Scathingly.*) And as likely as not he has looked out the girl too—dash my soul. Talked to you about it—did he? And do you happen to know the Judy—may I ask?

(*Window in* CAPT. H.'S *cottage runs up. They start and stand still.*)

CAPT. H. (*Above, begins slowly*): A grinning information fellow from a crazy town. (*Voice changes.*) Bessie, I see you . . .

BESSIE (*Shrilly*): Captain Hagberd! Say nothing. You don't understand. For heaven's sake don't.

CAPT. H.: Send him away this minute, or I will tell Harry. They know nothing of Harry

in this crazy town. Harry's coming home to-morrow. Do you hear? One day more!

(*Silence.*)

HARRY (*Mutters*): Well!—he *is* a character.

CAPT. H. (*Chuckles softly*): Never you fear! The boy shall marry you. (*Sudden anger.*) He'll have to. I'll make him. Or, if not—(*Furious*)—I'll cut him off with a shilling, and leave everything to you. Jackanapes! Let him starve!

(*Window rumbles down.*)

HARRY (*Slowly*): So it's you—the girl. It's you! Now I begin to see. . . . By heavens, you have a heart as soft as your woman's voice.

BESSIE (*Half averted, face in hands*): You see! Don't come near me.

HARRY (*Makes a step towards her*): I must have another look at your pale face.

BESSIE (*Turns unexpectedly and pushes him with both hands;* HARRY *staggers back and stands still; fiercely*): Go away.

HARRY (*Watching her*): Directly. But

women always had to get me out of my scrapes. I am a beggar now, and you must help me out of my scrape.

BESSIE (*Who at the word "beggar" had begun fumbling in the pocket of her dress, speaks wildly*) : Here it is. Take it. Don't look at me. Don't speak to me !

HARRY (*Swaggers up under the lamp ; looks at coin in his palm*) : Half-a-quid . . . my fare !

BESSIE (*Hands clenched*) : Why are you still here ?

HARRY : Well, you *are* a fine figure of a girl. My word ! I've a good mind to stop—for a week.

BESSIE (*Pain and shame*) : Oh ! . . . What are you waiting for ? If I had more money I would give it all, all. I would give everything I have to make you go—to make you forget you had ever heard my voice and seen my face. (*Covers face with hands.*)

HARRY (*Sombre, watches her*) : No fear ! I haven't forgotten a single one of you in the world. Some 've given me more than money.

No matter. You can't buy me in—and you can't buy yourself out . . .

(*Strides towards her. Seizes her arms. Short struggle.* BESSIE *gives way. Hair falls loose.* HARRY *kisses her forehead, cheeks, lips, then releases her.* BESSIE *staggers against railings.*)

(*Exit* HARRY ; *measured walk without haste.*)

Scene 5

Bessie. Capt. Hagberd *at window.*

Bessie (*Staring eyes, hair loose, back against railings; calls out*): Harry! (*Gathers up her skirts and runs a little way.*) Come back, Harry. (*Staggers forward against lamp-post.*) Harry! (*Much lower.*) Harry! (*In a whisper.*) Take me with you. (*Begins to laugh, at first faintly, then louder.*)

(*Window rumbles up, and* Capt. H.'s *chuckle mingles with* Bessie's *laughter, which abruptly stops.*)

Capt. H. (*Goes on chuckling; speaks cautiously*): Is he gone yet, that information fellow? Do you see him anywhere, my dear?

Bessie (*Low and stammering*): N-no, no! (*Totters away from lamp-post.*) I don't see him.

Capt. H. (*Anxious*): A grinning vagabond, my dear. Good girl. It's you who drove him away. Good girl.

(*Stage gradually darkens.*)

BESSIE: Go in; be quiet! You have done harm enough.

CAPT. H. (*Alarmed*): Why? Do you hear him yet, my dear?

BESSIE (*Sobs, drooping against the railings*): No! No! I don't. I don't hear him any more.

CAPT. H. (*Triumphant*): Now we shall be all right, my dear, till our Harry comes home to-morrow. (*Affected gurgling laugh.*)

BESSIE (*Distracted*): Be quiet. Shut yourself in. You will make me mad. (*Losing control of herself, repeats with rising inflexion.*) You make me mad. (*With despair.*) There is no to-morrow! (*Sinks to ground near middle railings. Low sobs.*)

(*Stage darkens perceptibly.*)

CAPT. H. (*Above, in a voice suddenly dismayed and shrill*): What! What do you say, my dear? No to-morrow? (*Broken, very feebly.*) No—to-morrow? (*Window runs down.*)

CARVIL (*Heard within, muffled bellowing*):

Bessie—Bessie—Bessie—Bessie—— (*At the first call* BESSIE *springs up and begins to stumble blindly towards the door. A faint flash of lightning, followed by a very low rumble of thunder.*) You !—Bessie !

CURTAIN.

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